

FOREIGN POLICY REPORTS

June 1, 1940

India's Struggle for Independence

BY JAMES FREDERICK GREEN

PUBLISHED TWICE A MONTH BY THE

Foreign Policy Association, Incorporated

EIGHT WEST FORTIETH STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

VOLUME XVI NUMBER 6 25¢ a copy \$5.00 a year

India's Struggle for Independence

BY JAMES FREDERICK GREEN

THE possibility of a compromise between the British government and the All-India National Congress has been increased by recent conciliatory statements on both sides. Mr. Leopold S. Amery, in his first statement as Secretary of State for India in the Churchill Cabinet, renewed Britain's pledge that constitutional reforms would be negotiated after the war. It was reported that the Labor party, as a condition of its participation in the Churchill coalition, insisted on a greater degree of independence for India. The Congress party, moreover, has postponed its threatened campaign of civil disobedience. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, one of its outstanding leaders, declared on May 20, 1940: "Launching a civil disobedience campaign at a time when Britain is engaged in a life and death struggle would be an act derogatory to India's honor."

For many decades, the government of India—with an area of 1,800,000 square miles and a population in 1931 of over 350,000,000—has constituted an exceedingly difficult political problem. During the World War, which stimulated Indian nationalism and the activity of the Congress party, the British government acknowledged the right of India to self-rule and promised constitutional reforms.¹ In 1919 Parliament passed the Government of India Act, which divided authority between the central government and the Provinces, expanded responsible government in the Provinces through a diarchical system—reserving some departments for the British and transferring others to the Indians—and provided for a review of constitutional problems ten years later. In 1928 the Simon Commission was sent to India to make this inquiry, and in 1935—after seven years of political struggle, conferences, and parliamentary debate—a new Government of India Act was adopted.

1. On August 20, 1917 the Secretary of State for India, Mr. E. S. Montagu, made the following declaration: "The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire." *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, August 20, 1917, vol. 97, col. 1695.

The Congress party, dissatisfied with the slowness of these reforms, renewed its demand for immediate and complete independence at the outbreak of war. The British government, on the other hand, has refused to consider any changes until the European war is ended, demanding that India achieve greater internal unity as a prerequisite for self-government. Failure of the British and of Congress leaders to achieve any compromise of their differences might lead to a long and bitter conflict throughout India, with far-reaching consequences for Britain in both Europe and Asia.

For the duration of the war, Great Britain's policy is largely dictated by military considerations. India—by far the largest and most valuable possession in the Empire—is at once a liability and an asset, since it both requires protection from invasion and provides man power and material for Britain's war effort. To defend India, Britain has sought to control maritime communications in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, and the Malay Straits, as well as land communications in the Near East, in Iran, Afghanistan, and along the Northwest Frontier. To preclude invasion by any other great power—Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union, or Japan—the British government is determined to maintain law and order in India, suppress civil disobedience, and combat subversive propaganda. Communist and Fascist influence among the India population, however, appears to be negligible, although Britain fears German and Russian penetration along India's land frontiers. Britain, moreover, regards the maintenance of its authority in India during the war as a necessary condition of its diplomatic and military prestige throughout Asia, Africa and the Near East—particularly among Muslim peoples.

In the World War, India became a reservoir of gold, raw materials and men for the Western front. It dispatched approximately 1,338,620 combatant troops and non-combatant auxiliaries to the various battle fronts—considerably more than all the British Dominions contributed together—and made a direct contribution of about £112,000,000

FOREIGN POLICY REPORTS, VOLUME XVI, NUMBER 6, JUNE 1, 1940

Published twice a month by the FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION, Incorporated, 8 West 40th Street, New York, N. Y., U.S.A. FRANK ROSS MCCOY, *President*; WILLIAM T. STONE, *Vice President* and Washington representative; VERA MICHELES DEAN, *Editor and Research Director*; HELEN TERRY, *Assistant Editor*. Research Associates: T. A. BISSON, A. RANDLE ELLIOTT, JAMES FREDERICK GREEN, FREDERICK T. MERRILL, HELEN H. MOORHEAD, DAVID H. POPPER, ONA K. D. RINGWOOD, HOWARD J. TRUEBLOOD, JOHN C. DEWILDE. Subscription Rates: \$5.00 a year; to F.P.A. members \$3.00; single copies 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter on March 31, 1931 at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Produced under union conditions and composed, printed and bound by union labor.

to the Empire war chest, while its subscription to war loans was even larger. It is the expectation of the British government that India will offer similar assistance during the present conflict, while the Congress party protests against India's belligerency and refuses to cooperate until its political demands are met. Yet independence or Dominion status would probably diminish the amount of assistance which Britain could obtain from India in a future conflict.

BRITAIN'S ECONOMIC STAKE

British policy is motivated not only by political and military considerations, but also by economic factors. It is virtually impossible to estimate Britain's present economic stake in India, and to calculate the economic benefits—direct and indirect—which the British derive from that country in peace time and hope to obtain in wartime. According to the most frequently quoted estimate—made by Mr. C. B. Sayer, formerly Secretary of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, in the *Financial Times* on January 9, 1930—British investments in 1929 totaled between £573,000,000 and £700,000,000.^{1a} The largest single item in this total is the portion of India's public debt held in England, amounting to £357,307,032 in 1937, with interest charges ranging from 2½ to 5 per cent.² India's so-called "Home Charges," or sterling payments made by the Government of India to London, averaged about £39,000,000 between 1928 and 1937, and reached £41,100,167 in 1937. Of this total, interest charges on the public debt accounted for approximately one-third, while the remainder included pension and furlough charges for civil

servants, payments for certain postal, telegraph and mint services in London, government supplies, new public works, and military charges not covered in the regular budget.

It is particularly difficult to estimate the direct and portfolio investments of Britishers in India business undertakings, and the resultant annual income from interest and dividends. In 1935-36 there were 940 foreign corporations operating in India—largely in British India—with a paid-up capital of £739,070,948. This total included, however, many corporations employing only a portion of their capital in India; it did not include private firms and partnerships, nor did it indicate the share of total capital held by Indians and the bonded indebtedness of these corporations. British investors also shared, to an equally unascertainable extent, in the 11,229 corporations registered in India, with a capital of Rs. 311,45,65,112, or about £233,395,000. While the Congress party, especially its left-wing members, is determined to destroy British "imperialism," it maintains that British and Indian capital will receive equal protection under a future constitution. Special provisions covering Britain's financial, commercial and shipping rights would presumably be included in any agreement negotiated by Britain and India.

Britain's economic stake in India also includes commercial and shipping privileges, although these have been curtailed somewhat since the World War. Owing to the free-trade policy maintained in India for many decades and to the imperial preferences established in the Ottawa treaties, British industries—especially cotton textiles and steel—enjoyed a privileged position. In recent years, however, Britain's share in the Indian market has declined markedly, partly as a result of severe Japanese competition.^{2a} British India and Burma, nevertheless, still provide a market for approximately 7 per cent of the United Kingdom's total exports; £34.6 million in 1936, £39.6 million in 1937, and £36.9 million in 1938.³

While India lacks many essential raw materials and heavy industries, its economic potential for

1a. Cf. Joan Beauchamp, *British Imperialism in India* (London, Lawrence, 1934), pp. 74-80; and Reginald Reynolds, *The White Sahibs in India* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1937), pp. 311-12. Mr. Sayer divided his minimum total of £573 million as follows: government sterling debt, £261 million; guaranteed railway debt, £120 million; 5% war loan, £17 million; investment in companies registered in India, £75 million; investment in companies registered outside India, £100 million. On the ground that the last two items were undoubtedly conservative, he suggested a total British investment of about £700 million. A Congress economist, however, believes that the total is almost £1,000 million, with an average return of 5 per cent. Z. A. Ahmad, *Some Economic and Financial Aspects of British Rule in India* (Congress Political and Economic Studies—No. 5; Allahabad, 1937), p. 34.

2. "Statistical Abstract for British India," *Parliamentary Papers*, Cmd. 6079, 1939, pp. 324-30. Unless otherwise cited, all figures in this section are taken from this source. Of India's total public debt, amounting in 1937 to Rs. 9,42,82,96,702, or about £707,123,000, a relatively large proportion—according to the British, at least—was incurred for "productive" purposes, such as railways, irrigation projects, and other public works. For a statement of India's "claims" against Britain, including "unproductive" expenditures—notably for Empire defense purposes—during the past hundred years, cf. Indian National Congress, *Report of the Select Committee on the Financial Obligations between Great Britain and India* (Allahabad, 1931, 2 vols.).

2a. DISTRIBUTION OF BRITISH INDIA IMPORTS

| | 1928-29 | 1936-37 | 1937-38 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| United Kingdom | 45.0% | 38.0% | 35.4% |
| Japan | 7.0 | 17.0 | 12.8 |
| United States | 7.1 | 6.5 | 7.4 |
| Germany | 6.3 | 9.7 | 8.9 |

Great Britain, Department of Overseas Trade, *Conditions and Prospects of United Kingdom Trade in India*, pp. 31-32. The 1937-38 figure is adjusted to allow for the separation of Burma from British India in 1937.

3. Great Britain, *Annual Statement of the Trade of the United Kingdom, 1938* (H.M. Stationery Office, 1939), vol. 1, p. 261. Manufactured articles account for approximately 90 per cent of Britain's exports to India.

wartime purposes is by no means negligible.^{3a} In 1936, for example, India produced the following important minerals: coal, 22,610,821 tons; gold, 333,385 ounces; copper ore and matte, 318,549 tons; iron ore, 2,553,247 tons; manganese ore, 813,442 tons; silver, 5,977,345 ounces; petroleum, 334,811,624 gallons; mica, 86,672 cwts.; and chromite, 49,486 tons. India's industrial capacity is far greater than in 1914, moreover, with the following output in 1936-37: jute, 1,253,113 tons; pig iron, 1,552,339 tons; steel ingots, 860,806 tons; finished steel, 613,303 tons; gasoline, 91,088,830 gallons; and portland cement, 997,414 tons. India is dependent upon imports, however, for most of its petroleum supplies, as well as iron and steel and machinery.

As in the World War, India's agricultural products provide a valuable supplement to the British Empire war economy. In 1937-38, India's chief exports, in order of value, were as follows: raw and waste cotton, jute manufactures, tea, raw jute, seeds (groundnut and oil), grain, and hides and skins. Although India was formerly a large importer of sugar, it now produces over 900,000 tons annually and is self-sufficient in this respect. Owing to the Ottawa treaties and other factors, the United Kingdom's imports from British India and Burma increased sharply in recent years—£51.9 million in 1936, £64.6 million in 1937, and £55.9 million in 1938.⁴

THE 1935 CONSTITUTION

The present controversy probably sounds the death-knell for the Government of India Act of 1935, which provided for an Indian federation and Provincial autonomy.⁵ This constitution sought to place under a central government both the eleven Provinces of British India and the 584 Native States, ruled by Princes who owe suzerainty to the Crown.⁶ These Native States, scattered throughout India, comprise about one-third of the country's territory and one-fourth of its population, and vary greatly in size, administrative efficiency,

and social progress. Unlike the Provinces, which as self-governing administrative units were to become an integral part of the new structure, the Princes were to join individually and to transfer their authority—in varying degree and by separate instruments of accession—to the Federal government. The federal scheme as a whole was not to be inaugurated until a substantial proportion of the more important States, approximately 112 in number, had acceded to it. The Governor-General, as representative of the Crown, was to be the head of the new federation, and to retain his residuary powers regarding the States which joined the federation as well as his historic prerogatives respecting the States which remained outside it.

The Federal Government. The constitution proposed a federal legislature, composed of a House of Assembly and a Council of State. The 375 seats in the House of Assembly were distributed as follows: 125 to the Princes and 250 to the Provinces, the latter members to be elected by the Provincial lower house or an electoral college and divided among the religious communities and several economic groups. The Council of State, composed of 260 members, was similarly divided: 100 appointed by the Princes; 10, including 4 from the States, appointed by the Governor-General; 150 elected in British India, including 136—one-third to be Muslims—chosen by the upper house or an electoral college in the Provinces, 10 by lesser minorities, and 4 from special districts.

The executive powers were vested in the Governor-General and a Council of Ministers, responsible in some degree to the legislature. Under a diarchical system, the Governor-General received exclusive control over defense, foreign relations, and ecclesiastical (Church of England) affairs, while the responsible ministers were given authority over law, commerce, industry, finance and other matters. The Governor-General, however, was granted emergency powers in every sphere of government activity, as well as authority to prevent the introduction of certain bills and the veto power over all legislation. The largest portion of the federal budget, moreover, was placed outside the jurisdiction of the legislature. Special protection was granted to British commerce and shipping, while control of the army, police and civil service remained largely in British hands. The legislature was forbidden to discuss certain subjects, including foreign relations and matters outside its jurisdiction in connection with the States.

This complex federal system has not yet come into effect, owing to the opposition—for different and often contradictory reasons—of almost all the vocal groups in India. The Congress party con-

3a. For a detailed analysis, cf. Sir Frank Noyce, "India's Economic Contributions to the War," *The Asiatic Review*, January 1940, pp. 31-46.

4. *Annual Statement of the Trade of the United Kingdom*, 1938, cited, p. 261. The United Kingdom's share in total British India exports increased as follows: 1928-29, 21.4 per cent; 1936-37, 32.1 per cent; 1937-38, 34.9 per cent. The 1937-38 figure is adjusted to allow for the separation of Burma.

5. For text, cf. *Public General Acts*, 1935-36, 26 Geo. V, and 1 Edw. VIII, c. 2; for detailed analysis, cf. T. A. Bisson, "A New Constitution for India," *Foreign Policy Reports*, July 17, 1935. For the historical background of the present struggle, including events up to 1935, cf. W. R. Smith, *Nationalism and Reform in India* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1938).

6. Under the Act, the Provinces of Sind and Orissa were created, making a total of eleven, and Burma and Aden were detached from British India.

demned the scheme from the outset, on the ground that it was designed to keep the central government in the hands of the Princes and the conservative elements of British India, since no popular party could possibly gain a majority in both houses.⁷ The Congress maintained, further, that the reserved and emergency powers of the Governor-General would prevent the executive from ever becoming really responsible to the legislature. The Princes, on the other hand, feared the loss of their prerogatives under federalism and believed that the Congress would use the central government as a means for promoting political reforms within the States. After negotiating for several years with the Governor-General regarding their Instruments of Accession, the Princes expressed their opposition to the present federal scheme in a conference on June 12, 1939.⁸ The Muslim League, representing part of the Mohammedan community, attacked the constitution as an instrument for Hindu domination of India.⁹ Both extremist and moderate opinion, moreover, viewed the new constitution as an imposed system which transferred the shadow but not the substance of power to India. Because of the general opposition and the exigencies of war, the Governor-General, on opening the Legislative Assembly, announced on September 11, 1939 that no further preparation for federation would be made until after the conclusion of peace.¹⁰

In the absence of a federal legislature, the Legislative Assembly of British India—a fairly representative body, established under the 1919 constitution, whose actions are not binding on the Governor-General and his Cabinet—continued in existence. With the aid of nationalist Muslims and others, the Congress party, which won most of the elective seats in the election of 1934, has managed—often for purely tactical reasons—to criticize and challenge the government on almost every major issue.¹¹ The Legislative Assembly has disapproved the government's finance bill every year since 1934, and has rejected successive tariff bills designed to revise the Anglo-Indian trade agreement negotiated in Ottawa in 1932. The Assembly has also censured the currency and defense policies of the government on several occasions. Even though the Assembly cannot bind the executive, it secures the moral victory of forcing the

executive to act in defiance of the elected representatives of the people.

Provincial Governments. The 1935 constitution abolished the diarchical system—established in the Provinces under the 1919 constitution—and substituted a restricted form of responsible government. Each of the eleven Provinces was to be administered by a Governor, appointed by the King. The Governor was to be aided and advised by a council of ministers, responsible to the legislature. All departments of government were placed under the ministers, who in normal times were to exercise rather wide powers. The Governor, however, retained many "special responsibilities" and "discretionary powers," particularly over financial questions, as a large portion of the Provincial budget was not to be submitted to the legislature. Upper houses were added to the legislatures in five of the Provinces where minority problems were most acute. The franchise, although still limited by property and educational qualifications, was considerably extended to include approximately one-fourth the adult population of British India. In each Province, special electorates were created for the different religious communities, economic groups, and other special interests.

The first election for the Provincial legislatures under the new arrangement took place in February 1937.¹² The Congress party, which campaigned against the constitution, received a majority in six Provinces—Bombay, Madras, United Provinces, Central Provinces, Bihar, Orissa—and the largest single vote in Bengal, Assam, and the Northwest Frontier Province. Parties favoring the Constitution won in the Punjab and Sind.¹³ Following this victory at the polls, the All-India Congress Committee—the executive body of the party—authorized the elected Congressmen on March 18 to accept seats in the new Provincial legislatures.¹⁴

The Congress leaders refused, however, to accept ministerial office until—in accordance with a resolution passed at the party's annual assembly

7. Cf. Bisson, "A New Constitution for India," cited, pp. 125-28.

8. *New York Herald Tribune*, June 13, 1939.

9. "India and the War: Statement issued by the Governor-General of India on 17th October, 1939," *Parliamentary Papers*, Cmd. 6121, 1939, p. 11.

10. *The New York Times*, September 12, 1939.

11. Bisson, "A New Constitution for India," cited, pp. 126-27.

12. For detailed discussion of the crisis regarding the Provincial governments between February and July 1937, cf. *The Round Table*, June 1937, pp. 612-27; September 1937, pp. 809-19.

13. In addition to the six Provinces won outright, despite the many handicaps imposed by the constitution, Congress members eventually formed ministries in the Northwest Frontier Province and Assam, the latter being won on September 13, 1938, following the resignation of Sir Muhammed Sadullah, the Muslim Chief Minister. All India Congress Committee (hereafter cited as A.I.C.C.), Foreign Department, *News Letter* (mimeographed), September 15, 1938. The Muslims held control of the Punjab and Sind. The Congress party won 715 of the 1,585 seats in the lower houses in the eleven Provinces, eight seats being undecided. In the upper houses of five Provinces, in which the voting is weighted in favor of conservative interests, the Congress was defeated. *New York Herald Tribune*, February 28, 1937.

14. *The New York Times*, March 22, 1937.

at Delhi on March 20—they received assurance that the Governors would not use their special powers to interfere in routine administration as long as the ministries acted within the constitution. Since the party's program, as adopted at the Delhi meeting, called for abolition of the constitution, the Governors were unwilling to give such an assurance.¹⁵ They maintained, moreover, that they had no power under the constitution to surrender their prerogatives. A formula for compromise, advocating that an arbitral tribunal should settle all disputes between the Governors and ministries, was offered by Mahatma Gandhi but rejected by the British government, which regarded this solution as contrary to the spirit of the constitution and unworkable.

The deadlock was finally broken on June 21, 1937 by the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, in a message which declared that the existing fears regarding Provincial administration were unjustified.¹⁶ The Viceroy stated that he had no intention of interfering at random in Provincial affairs, and that the Provincial Governors would make every effort to cooperate with the ministries. On July 7 the Congress Working Committee—a small steering committee of the party—adopted a resolution permitting Congressmen to take office where invited by the Governor, on the understanding that they would use the office for combating the constitution and prosecuting a constructive program.¹⁷ Shortly after this initial victory, the Congress party formed governments in seven Provinces and participated in coalitions in two others.

During the two years in which the Provincial ministries held office, they promoted legislation regarding land-owning, usury, labor conditions, untouchability, prohibition, and other economic and social subjects.¹⁸ In Bihar, for example, the government secured the following agrarian reforms: reduction in rents, introduction of an agricultural income tax, lowering of canal rates, restriction of feudal dues and levies, protection of tenant rights, establishment of maximum interest rates, and restriction on the collection of arrears in rent.¹⁹ In Bombay the government obtained the enactment of a bill for arbitration of industrial disputes, despite opposition that resulted in an outbreak of strikes and violence in one area.²⁰ In January 1939 the Bihar ministry secured repeal

of the Public Safety Act which gave the executive wide powers to intern suspected persons and investigate public meetings.²¹

Perhaps the most spectacular and controversial achievement of the Congress ministries, however, was the promotion of prohibition. The Congress had long maintained that the British government was increasing social demoralization by deriving too large a portion of the public revenues from liquor taxes. By July 1939 prohibition had been introduced in certain districts within seven of the eight Provinces governed by Congress ministries. This legislation created serious fiscal problems for the Provincial governments, since excise revenue normally represented a considerable part of their total income.²² To secure a new source of revenue, the United Provinces government introduced a graduated salary tax, although under the Act of 1935 income taxes were restricted to the central government and employment taxes to the Provinces. In order to safeguard the fiscal position of the central government, the British Parliament in January 1940 amended the Act, limiting to 50 rupees the amount which may be levied by a Provincial government on an individual in any one year through trade, profession or employment tax.²³

The only serious crisis which arose during this period related to the problem of political prisoners. On February 15, 1938 the Congress ministries in Bihar and United Provinces resigned, following the refusal of the Governors in those two Provinces to accept their advice concerning immediate release of virtually all political prisoners.²⁴ The Governors refused to permit wholesale release of prisoners while investigation of individual cases was in progress, and the Governor-General intervened under Section 126 of the Act of 1935, granting him special powers for maintenance of law and order.²⁵ The Working Committee of the Congress, meanwhile, accepted a resolution drafted by Mahatma Gandhi against extending the controversy to other Provinces. A compromise was

21. *Ibid.*, February 2, 1939.

22. In Bombay excise revenue amounted to Rs. 32 million, or 26 per cent of total revenues; Madras, Rs. 38 million, or 25 per cent; United Provinces, Rs. 15 million, or 20 per cent; Bihar, Rs. 10 million, or 20 per cent; Central Provinces, Rs. 6 million, or 14 per cent; Assam, Rs. 4.5 million, or 10 per cent; and Orissa, Rs. 2 million, or 12 per cent. A.I.C.C. Foreign Department, *News Letter*, July 13, 1939.

23. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, January 18, 24, 1940, vol. 356, cols. 271-99, 627, 649. Except for the wartime legislation adopted on September 1, 1939, this financial clause—and a few minor changes introduced simultaneously—was the first amendment to the Government of India Act.

24. *The Times* (London), February 17, 18, 1938.

25. "Resignation of Ministries in Bihar and the United Provinces (February 1938)," *Parliamentary Papers*, Cmd. 5674, 1938.

15. *Ibid.*, March 30, 1937.

16. *Christian Science Monitor*, July 13, 1937.

17. *Ibid.*, July 8, 1937.

18. Cf. Indian National Congress, *Report of the General Secretary, March 1938-February 1939* (Allahabad, 1939), pp. 42-65.

19. A.I.C.C., Foreign Department, *News Letter* (mimeographed), October 27, 1938.

20. *Ibid.*, November 23, 1938.

reached in Bihar on February 25, and in United Provinces on February 26, by which the ministers agreed to examine the cases individually, while the Governors—yielding to Congress pressure, in an effort to keep the constitution in operation—agreed to accept the recommendations of their ministers.

It is difficult to appraise the work of the Provincial governments—whether Congress, Muslim or coalition—because they were in office only two years. Both British and Indian opinion seems, however, to be generally favorable toward this experiment in self-government. The Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, declared on September 27, 1939 that “they [the Provincial leaders] have shown that they are capable of dealing with the problems which face them in their country, and they have cooperated in an admirable spirit with the Governors with whom they have been associated.”²⁶ The Governor-General, Lord Linlithgow, also praised the Provincial administrations as follows: “For nearly two-and-a-half years now the Provinces have been conducting their own affairs under the scheme of the Act. That they have done so, on the whole, with great success, even if now and then difficulties have arisen, no one can question. Whatever the political party in power in these Provinces, all can look with satisfaction on a distinguished record of public achievement during the past two-and-a-half years.”²⁷ While the Muslim League has frequently charged that the Congress ministries jeopardized the rights of Muslim minorities, the Provincial Governors on no occasion used their power to intervene on behalf of minorities. Impartial observers disagree concerning these allegations, but believe that many of them are exaggerated.

EFFECT OF THE EUROPEAN WAR

Although the Congress party continued its work on behalf of Indian independence during the four years following the adoption of the Government of India Act, the political struggle proceeded without resort to civil disobedience—used in 1919-21, 1930, and 1932-34—and with relatively few incidents of violence. The outbreak of the European war in September 1939, however, seriously affected relations between Great Britain and India, as well as the policy of the Congress party, the conflict between Congress and the Muslim League, and the position of the Native States. The present struggle was foreshadowed in March 1939, when the All India Congress, meeting in Tripuri, ex-

pressed “its entire disapproval of British Foreign Policy culminating in the Munich Pact, the Anglo-Italian Agreement and recognition of Rebel Spain.”²⁸ The Congress simultaneously reiterated its demand for Indian independence: “The Congress declares afresh its solemn resolve to achieve independence for the nation and to have a constitution framed for a free India through a Constituent Assembly, elected by the people on the basis of adult suffrage and without any interference by a foreign authority. No other constitutions or attempted solutions of the problem can be accepted by the Indian people.”²⁹ One month later, following Germany’s occupation of Prague and the consequent shift in British foreign policy, the Chamberlain Cabinet introduced legislation for amending the Government of India Act, in order to concentrate all authority in the Governor-General during a wartime emergency.³⁰ This action was strongly condemned by the All India Congress Committee, meeting in Calcutta on April 29-May 1, 1939.³¹⁻³² The Committee further protested the dispatch of Indian troops to Aden, and declared that “the Congress is determined to oppose all attempts to impose a war on India and use Indian resources in a war without the consent of the Indian people.” The Central Legislative Assembly had previously demanded that no Indian troops should be sent abroad without its consent, and had received a qualified pledge to that effect from the War Secretary.

Similar protests were voiced by Congress leaders in August 1939, when Indian troops were sent to Egypt and Singapore. The Governor-General at this time consulted leaders of all parties—including the Congress—in the Central Legislative Assembly, but did not make the discussion public.³³ As a consequence, the Congress Working Committee on August 12 called on all Congress members of the Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending its next session, and asked the Provincial governments not to assist the war preparations of Great Britain.³⁴ The Working Committee further protested that the Governor-General had again extended the life of the Legislative As-

28. A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, March 28, 1939, p. 7.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

30. India Burma (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill, 1939. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, April 5, 1939, vol. 112, col. 590; April 25, 1939, vol. 112, cols. 724-30; May 9, 1939, vol. 112, cols. 997-98. The British Parliament did not enact the amending bill, however, until September 1, 1939. Cf. p. 76.

31-32. A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, May 19, 1939, p. 14.

33. Address by Lord Zetland, Secretary for India, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, October 18, 1939, vol. 114, cols. 1445-46.

34. A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, September 7, 1939.

26. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, September 27, 1939, vol. 114, col. 1168.

27. “India and the War,” Cmd. 6121, cited, p. 5.

sembly by one year, since normally there should have been an election in November 1937.

On September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, the British Parliament passed a large number of emergency laws, including amendments to the Government of India Act, which were enacted virtually without discussion.³⁵ One of these amending clauses, which had been introduced in April 1939, granted to the Governor-General "essential powers of direction and control" over the Provincial Governments when "the Governor-General has declared that the security of India is threatened by war."³⁶ The British government asserted that such a grant of authority was necessary to "fill the gaps" in the original Act, since Section 102 had given the Federal legislature (not yet established), but not the Federal executive, full power to deal with any subject, including those allotted specifically to the Provinces. Critics of the amendment charged that it was designed to destroy the Provincial Governments, which contained the only element of genuinely responsible government in India.³⁷ Since the Governor-General, they pointed out, had authority under Section 45 of the Act to assume any powers within the federation (except those of the federal court) and to suspend any part of the Constitution, the amending clause merely allowed him to govern arbitrarily without appearing to suspend the Constitution.

Two days later, immediately following Great Britain's declaration of war, the Governor-General proclaimed India a belligerent, and published a Defense of India Ordinance for the maintenance of order.³⁸ In addition to many drastic provisions curtailing civil liberties during wartime, the Ordinance empowered the chief constables to arrest without warrant any person "reasonably suspected of having acted, of acting or about to act in a manner prejudicial to public safety, or the effective prosecution of the war." Among such proscribed activities were included any act likely to prejudice the Government's relations with the Native States or foreign powers, or any display of disaffection or contempt toward the Government.

The measures taken by the British government to bring India into the war were promptly challenged by the Congress Working Committee, which asserted—in a lengthy statement issued at

Wardha on September 14—that "this has been done without the consent of the Indian people whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government."³⁹ The Working Committee expressed its "entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit," and stated that its members "unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathize with those who resist it." The Committee demanded, however, that Britain clarify its war aims and outlined the definitive wartime policy of the Congress as follows:

"But India cannot associate itself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her. . . . If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference, and must guide her own policy."

This position was approved in even stronger language on October 10 by the All India Congress Committee, the larger executive body, by a vote of 188-58.⁴⁰ The resentment of the Congress leaders, meanwhile, had been increased on September 27 when the Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, accused them in an address of being impractical and dishonorable.⁴¹ As the Governor-General had already begun conversations with leaders of the Congress, the Committee declared that "it does not wish to take any final decision precipitately and without giving every opportunity for the war and peace aims of the British Government to be clarified, with particular reference to India."

THE VICEROY'S EFFORTS AT COMPROMISE

During the first few months of the war, the Governor-General made numerous unsuccessful

35. "An Act to Amend the Government of India Act, 1935," *Public General Acts*, 1939, 2 & 3 Geo. VI, c. 66.

36. Address by Lieut.-Colonel Muirhead, Under-Secretary of State for India, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, September 1, 1939, vol. 351, cols. 151-53.

37. India League (London), *Memorandum on the India Burma (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill, 1939* (mimeographed, no date).

38. For text, cf. "Ordinance No. V of 1939," *The Gazette of India*, September 3, 1939 (Simla, Government of India).

39. For text, cf. A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, September 25, 1939, pp. 8-14; also, "India and the War," Cmd. 6121, cited, pp. 11-15.

40. For text, cf. A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, October 21, 1939, pp. 4-6; also, "India and the War," Cmd. 6121, cited, pp. 16-17.

41. "I know many of the leaders of the Congress movement; they are men who are animated by burning patriotism and they do, I think, sometimes lose sight, while lifting their eyes to the stars, of the practical difficulties which stand in the way on the ground at their feet. . . . I cannot help expressing the feeling that it is somewhat unfortunate that they should have chosen this time to reassert their claims. . . . I think the British people are very susceptible to a treatment which they regard as honourable and appropriate to a particular occasion." *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, September 27, 1939, vol. 114, col. 1167.

attempts to win Congress support. On September 4, 1939, the day following the announcement of India's belligerency, Lord Linlithgow conferred at length with Mahatma Gandhi. While expressing his personal sympathy for the Allied cause, Gandhi stated that he was not authorized to initiate negotiations.⁴² Shortly after, the Governor-General undertook similar exploratory conversations with the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes and Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, president of the Muslim League. Later in the month, between September 25 and 30, Lord Linlithgow again conferred with Mahatma Gandhi, Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress leader, but with no result. Meanwhile, the Congress Working Committee had already issued its sharply worded resolution of September 15, and the Muslim League Working Committee on September 18 had countered with a declaration approving the suspension of the federal constitution and advocating its abandonment.⁴³ The Muslim League further protested the unfair treatment accorded the Muslim population by the Provincial governments, and demanded that no constitutional changes be made without the consent and approval of the League.

Following further conferences, involving fifty-two representatives of different political, economic and social interests, the Governor-General issued a formal statement on October 17, 1939.⁴⁴ Lord Linlithgow, after praising the work of the Provincial ministries and regretting the postponement of federalization, reaffirmed the Government's intention to grant India Dominion status—as promised in the Preamble to the 1919 constitution, the interpretation made in 1929 by Lord Irwin as Viceroy, and the statement in 1935 by Sir Samuel Hoare, then Secretary for India.⁴⁵ The Governor-General then declared that the British government would be willing at the end of the war to revise the Act of 1935 in "consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian Princes." As an interim measure, Lord Linlithgow proposed the establishment of a consultative committee, to be selected by him from panels prepared by the major political parties and the Princes for the purpose of prosecuting the war and laying the foundation for constitutional reform. On the following day, Octo-

ber 18, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, amplified the Viceroy's pronouncement, arguing that the Government could not contemplate freedom for India until greater internal unity had been achieved and that it could not undertake constitutional changes during wartime.⁴⁶

These declarations provoked a storm of protest from the Congress leaders and others. Mahatma Gandhi on October 18 remarked: "It would have been better if the British Government had declined to make any declaration whatsoever. The Viceroy's long statement simply shows that the old policy of divide and rule is to continue. So far as I can see Congress will not be a party to it."⁴⁷ The Congress Working Committee on October 23 strongly condemned Lord Linlithgow's statement as "wholly unsatisfactory" and "an unequivocal reiteration of the old imperialistic policy."⁴⁸ It called upon Congress ministers in the Provincial governments to resign, while warning against any hasty action in the form of civil disobedience or political strikes.

In the House of Commons, moreover, the Government was urged to adopt a more liberal policy by Sir George Schuster and Sir Stanley Reed, Conservatives and well-known authorities on Indian affairs, as well as Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Wedgewood Benn, of the Labor party.⁴⁹ Mr. Benn, Secretary of State for India in the Labor Cabinet of 1929-31, argued as follows:

"People may say that the occasion is badly chosen, but if you are asking India to make heavy sacrifices, surely she is entitled to be assured that the cause for which you are fighting is also hers. It must be remembered, too, that this is largely a diplomatic and political war and that we ourselves stand at the bar of world opinion, and it is up to us to prove before the world that we are sincere in the professions which we make."⁵⁰

Sir Samuel Hoare, Lord Privy Seal and spokesman for the Government, defended the policy of postponing constitutional discussion and issued an indirect but grim warning that civil disobedience in India would be met by force.⁵¹

Despite the resignation—between October 22

46. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, October 18, 1939, vol. 114, cols. 1443-49.

47. *The Times*, October 19, 1939.

48. A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, December 9, 1939, pp. 2-4.

49. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, October 26, 1939, vol. 352, cols. 1620 ff.

50. *Ibid.*, col. 1626.

51. "If it came to this issue we should have no choice; the King Emperor's Government must be carried on and it would be carried on with efficiency, strength and justice. . . . Whether its promoters desire it or not non-cooperation leads to civil disobedience, to breaches of law and order and the vicious circle of riot and repression from which we had hoped to have escaped for ever." *Ibid.*, cols. 1639-40.

42. A.I.C.C., *News from India* (mimeographed), February 1, 1940.

43. For text, cf. "India and the War," Cmd. 6121, cited, pp. 17-19.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-10.

45. The Viceroy quoted the Instrument of Instructions issued to him by the King in May 1937: "that the partnership between India and the United Kingdom within our Empire may be furthered to the end that India may attain its due place among our Dominions." *Ibid.*, p. 6.

and November 10—of the Congress ministries in eight Provinces, Lord Linlithgow made two more efforts to effect a settlement.⁵² On November 2 he conferred with Mahatma Gandhi, Mr. Jinnah, and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, president of the Congress. On this occasion the Governor-General expanded his offer of October 18. He proposed the enlargement of his Executive Council to include representatives of both the Congress and the Muslim League, provided that the two organizations could reach an agreement regarding the governments of the Provinces.⁵³ A conversation between the Congress leaders and Mr. Jinnah on November 2 proved unavailing, however, as the former maintained that the Viceroy had dodged the main issues—clarification of Britain's war aims and the right of self-determination for India—and that the communal problem was secondary to the question of independence.⁵⁴ The Governor-General, on November 5, announced that his project had failed and utilized the emergency powers of the Act of 1935 to vest Provincial authority in the Governors, in view of the resignation of their ministries.⁵⁵ Lord Zetland supported this action in Parliament on November 7, rejecting Mahatma Gandhi's plan for a constituent assembly because of Britain's obligation to the various minorities of India.⁵⁶ As a direct result of this stiffening on the part of the British, the Congress Working Committee on November 23 openly threatened civil disobedience.⁵⁷

The second of the Viceroy's recent efforts at compromise, undertaken in February 1940, proved equally unsuccessful. Speaking in Bombay on January 10, 1940, Lord Linlithgow renewed his appeal for a reconciliation, asserting that Britain desired to protect the minorities in India, to secure Dominion status for India as soon as possible,

52. The ministries in the Provinces which are predominantly Muslim—the Punjab, Bengal and Sind—remained in office, and the Legislative Assembly of the Punjab adopted—by 104 votes to 39—a resolution pledging support of Britain during the war. *The New York Times*, November 7, 1939.

53. For details of the proposal, cf. letter of the Viceroy to the President, November 2, 1939, A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, December 9, 1939, pp. 17-19; also "India and the War: Announcement published by the Governor-General of India on 6th November 1939, and Correspondence connected therewith," *Parliamentary Papers*, Cmd. 6129, 1939, pp. 3-6. The Executive Council, acting as a Cabinet, includes the following seven members: Commander-in-Chief, Ministers for Finance, Home, Communications, Law, Education and Health, and Commerce and Labor. Only the three last-named portfolios are held by Indians.

54. Letters of Dr. Prasad and Mr. Jinnah to the Viceroy, November 3, 11, 1939, respectively; A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, December 9, 1939, pp. 19-22; also, "India and the War," Cmd. 6129, cited, pp. 6-11.

55. *Christian Science Monitor*, November 6, 1939.

56. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, November 7, 1939, vol. 114, cols. 1695-98.

57. A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, December 9, 1939, pp. 5-8.

and to end the deadlock between the political parties.⁵⁸ Although Dr. Prasad replied on January 12 that the Congress still insisted upon complete independence and Mr. Nehru a few days later termed the communal issue "a red herring," Mahatma Gandhi—writing in his newspaper *Harijan*—discovered in the Bombay speech "the germ of a settlement honourable to both sides."⁵⁹

A final series of conferences, held at Delhi early in February 1940, proved futile, however, as the Governor-General again insisted on an agreement between the Hindus and Muslims and stressed the importance of defense problems. Following his interview with Lord Linlithgow on February 5 Mahatma Gandhi stated that "the Viceroy's offer contemplates final determination of India's destiny by the British Government, whereas the Congress contemplates just the contrary."⁶⁰ Both agreed to postpone any further discussion of the constitutional problem. On February 6 the Viceroy received Mr. Jinnah, who reiterated the demands of the Muslim League. The stalemate resulting from these meetings has continued unbroken to the present time. The Muslim League, meanwhile, increased its demands, suggesting the division of India into autonomous Muslim and Hindu states.⁶¹ According to Mr. Jinnah, such a Muslim state would include the Northwest Frontier Province, Kashmir, Bengal and Assam, with Lahore as the capital.⁶²

POLICY OF THE CONGRESS PARTY

Throughout these lengthy negotiations with the Viceroy, the Congress party has been hampered by the split between its conservative and radical wings which has persisted in different forms for twenty years.⁶³ The success of the Congress since the World War has been due largely to the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, who has constantly sought to keep all of the different religious communities, economic interests and political factions within a single nationalist organization. Skillfully combining ethics, politics and economics,

58. *The Times*, January 11, 1940.

59. The India League (London), *News India*, February 1940.

60. *The New York Times*, February 7, 1940. For full text of joint communiqué issued by Lord Linlithgow and Mr. Gandhi, cf. "India and the War: Communiqué issued by the Governor-General and resolutions by the Indian National Congress, the All-India Moslem League and the Chamber of Princes," *Parliamentary Papers*, Cmd. 6196, 1940, pp. 4-5.

61. *The New York Times*, March 23, 1940.

62. *Ibid.*, April 1, 1940.

63. Until about 1930, the chief opposition to Gandhi came from business men and others who thought him too radical; in recent years, it developed among left-wing and younger members who thought him too conservative. For a description of Congress leaders, as well as Indian affairs in general, cf. John Gunther, *Inside Asia* (New York, Harpers, 1939), pp. 344-482.

Gandhi has based his policy on the principle of "non-violent direct action," or *Satyagraha*,⁶⁴ and has promoted a "spinning wheel program" for the development of native handicrafts to compete against textile imports from Britain. After leading the long campaign for independence which ended in the Act of 1935—involving civil disobedience and the Round Table Conferences in London⁶⁵—Gandhi resigned from the Congress in 1934 to devote his efforts to social welfare, particularly among the depressed classes. During the past six years, however, he has directed policy from behind the scenes and intervened at periods of crisis.

Because of his insistence on non-violence and the spiritual purification of his followers, Mahatma Gandhi is now regarded as a conservative by the left wing of the party, which stresses the need for economic reform in accordance with Marxist philosophy and for immediate political action.⁶⁶ In addition to opposing Marxism on religious grounds, Gandhi endeavors to keep the business men and right-wing members, often allied to British interests in the past, within the Congress. He avoids, moreover, the emphasis of the younger radicals on the class struggle and on the need for industrialization in India, because of his desire to create national unity and his belief in the moral value of handicraft work. The socialist bloc, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and M. N. Roy, argues that Indian independence will require both widespread industrialization and the defeat of Indian as well as British capitalism. Mr. Nehru, who ranks second only to Gandhi in prestige and influence within the Congress, remains loyal to Gandhi's leadership, however, and often overrules his socialist colleagues in the interest of party harmony.⁶⁷ After the outbreak of the European conflict, Mr. Nehru became chairman of an emergency War Committee and directed most of the party's action regarding the constitutional question. He is generally believed to have drafted many of the most strongly worded resolutions of the Congress committees.⁶⁸

64. For a detailed analysis of the theory and practice of *Satyagraha*, cf. Krishnalal Shridharani, *War Without Violence: A Study of Gandhi's Method and Its Accomplishments* (New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1939).

65. Cf. T. A. Bisson, "Constitutional Developments in India," *Foreign Policy Reports*, September 13, 1933.

66. For a recent interpretation of Congress party politics, arguing that the Bose faction dissents on questions of political strategy rather than economic philosophy, cf. Krishnalal Shridharani, "Gandhi Has Decided," *The Nation*, May 4, 1940, pp. 364-66.

67. Cf. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography: With Musings on Recent Events in India* (London, John Lane, 1936); *India and the World* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1936); "India's Demand and England's Answer," *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1940, pp. 449-55; Anup Singh, *Nehru: The Rising Star of India* (New York, John Day, 1939).

This split between Mahatma Gandhi and the "old guard" who control the party machinery, on the one hand, and the socialist bloc, on the other, created a serious crisis in the spring of 1939, when Mr. Bose was compelled by the Gandhi forces to resign the Congress presidency. Mr. Bose, who had been president in 1938, was elected for a second term by the All India Congress Committee on January 29, 1939, defeating Pattabi Sitaramayya, the Gandhi candidate, by 1,575 to 1,376.⁶⁹ At the Tripuri session of the Congress—in the absence of Gandhi, who was recovering from a four-day fast on behalf of reforms in Rajkot State⁷⁰—the delegates on March 10 passed the equivalent of a no-confidence motion against President Bose, by a vote of 218 to 133. The resolution, framed by the Gandhi group and recommended by Jawaharlal Nehru, directed that Mr. Bose select a Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Mahatma Gandhi.⁷¹ After a month of conflict with the high command, Mr. Bose on April 29 resigned the presidency, to which Dr. Rajendra Prasad, a Gandhi supporter, was immediately elected.⁷²

Since his defeat, Mr. Bose has organized a "forward bloc" to promote socialism both within and outside the Congress and has challenged Gandhi's leadership at many points, especially since the outbreak of war.⁷³ As head of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, he organized protest meetings and publicly criticized the Congress high command. The Congress Working Committee, after unsuccessfully rebuking Mr. Bose, took severe disciplinary measures in August 1939 by depriving him of the right to hold any Congress office for three years.⁷⁴ The Bengal group continued its opposition to the Congress leaders, however, and was again censured on November 23.⁷⁵ At the annual session of the Congress held at Ramgarh, the Bose faction—extremely vocal but not yet dominant—renewed its fight against the right-wing on the question of wartime policy but was decisively defeated on March 18, 1940.⁷⁶ After rejecting all of the left-wing's amendments for immediate and drastic action against Great Britain, the Congress voted Gandhi complete power to

68. For his recent statements, cf. Jawaharlal Nehru, *China, Spain, and the War* (London, Kitabistan, 1940), pp. 129-257.

69. *The New York Times*, January 30, 31, 1939.

70. Cf. p. 83.

71. *The New York Times*, March 11, 1939.

72. *Ibid.*, April 30, May 1, 1939.

73. For examples of his sharp and often personal attacks on Gandhi and the Working Committee, cf. *Forward Bloc* (Calcutta), December 23, 1939, pp. 3-4; March 2, 1940, p. 3.

74. A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, September 7, 1939.

75. *Ibid.*, December 9, 1939, pp. 9-12.

76. *The New York Times*, March 19, 1940.

launch non-violent civil disobedience at his discretion.

Mahatma Gandhi's policy during the first nine months of the European War has been motivated by a variety of factors. Aware that the nationalist movement can succeed only if it remains united, Gandhi has continued his life-long policy of appealing to all classes and interests and of holding conservatives and radicals together within the Congress. To maintain party discipline and to assure himself of popular support during his negotiations with the Viceroy, therefore, he has insisted on complete acceptance of his leadership. At the Congress assembly at Ramgarh, Gandhi declared on March 20: "We must break the bond of slavery. But if I am your general you must accept my conditions."⁷⁷

During recent months, as in previous periods of political conflict, Mahatma Gandhi has shown a willingness to negotiate a compromise with the British, although he has never repudiated the ultimate objective of the Congress—Purna Swaraj, or complete independence. At the outbreak of war, however, he expressed vigorous approval of the Allied cause and urged the Congress to avoid taking advantage of Britain's preoccupation with the European conflict.⁷⁸ Despite the efforts of many Congressmen to force a stronger policy, Gandhi condemned any resort to "blackmail" and insisted on exhausting every possibility of compromise. In his effort to keep the door open for negotiations, Gandhi openly hinted that he would accept a formula providing for a formal declaration of status and postponing settlement of detailed arrangements.⁷⁹ Mahatma Gandhi desires, in other words, a vote of credit from the British for complete independence, on which he can draw gradually according to his needs in the Congress and the country.

The Congress party early in 1928 asserted that if Dominion status, its immediate goal, were not achieved by the end of the year, it would demand complete independence. In recent years, particularly since the Act of 1935, it has repudiated any settlement short of unconditional independence. It is probable, however, that Mahatma Gandhi would accept the equivalent of Dominion status, and agree to many concessions regarding British defense and economic interests.⁸⁰ The present demands of the Congress have centered around the proposal for a constituent assembly, which apparently was originated by Jawaharlal Nehru and

later accepted by Gandhi.⁸¹ The plan calls for a large assembly, elected by universal adult suffrage in both the Provinces and States, to draft a new Indian constitution without any interference from the British government. Mahatma Gandhi has indicated that he would be willing to give a separate vote to the Muslims and allow representation to other minorities in proportion to their numerical strength.⁸² It is possible that he would accept the present electorates of the Provinces as a substitute for the unrestricted franchise, and omit the States from the deliberation if necessary.

An additional reason for Gandhi's caution regarding civil disobedience is his fear of provoking new Hindu-Moslem riots, because of the hostility of the Muslim League to the Congress and the loyalty of many Muslims to Great Britain. On October 30, 1939, Mr. Gandhi wrote in his newspaper, *Harijan*, as follows:

"Apart from the uncertainty of the observance of non-violence in Congress ranks is the tremendous fact that the Muslim League looks upon the Congress as the enemy of the Muslims. This would make it well-nigh impossible for the Congress to organize successful non-violent revolution through civil disobedience. It will certainly mean Hindu-Muslim riots."⁸³

The danger of communal strife probably grows greater the longer the present tension continues, since the Muslim League is constantly raising its demands and seeking to improve its position before a new constitutional settlement is made, as well as sponsoring the growth of a semi-military Muslim youth organization, known as the Khaksars.⁸⁴

Perhaps the most important factor in Gandhi's calculations is his fear that civil disobedience, once started, might quickly get beyond his control and lead to widespread violence. Before the opening of the Congress sessions at Ramgarh, he declared on March 9 that "if there is no hope of attaining the necessary measure of discipline by non-violence, it will be better to let me retire from leadership."⁸⁵ Gandhi's insistence on non-violence

77. *New York Herald Tribune*, March 21, 1939.

78. "Show no enthusiasm for the war in Europe and refrain from stabbing Britain in the back." *The New York Times*, December 11, 1939.

79. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1940.

80. The phrase "Dominion status" is disliked by the Congress not only because it implies permanent membership in the British Commonwealth, but also because it suggests stabilization of India's present relations with the existing Dominions, which through various types of legislation exclude Indians, despite their British citizenship. Cf. *The Indian Social Reformer* (Bombay), January 20, 1940, pp. 248-49; January 27, 1940, pp. 260-61.

81. For Gandhi's views regarding the constituent assembly, expressed in *Harijan*, cf. A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, December 9, 1939, pp. 28-31.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

83. A.I.C.C., *Congress Bulletin*, December 9, 1939.

84. Eric Beecroft, "Dynamics of India's Internal Conflict," *Amerasia*, May 1940, p. 132.

85. *Ibid.*, March 10, 1940.

undoubtedly results both from his adherence to the ethical principle involved and from his realization that a violent rebellion would probably fail after provoking ruthless suppression by the British.⁸⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, as usual, desires to avoid any confusion of issues, since the government could easily combat civil disobedience under its emergency regulations against wartime disloyalty and sedition.

BRITISH POLICY

In reply, the British argue that the Congress nationalists minimize the difficulty of planning and administering the government of India.⁸⁷ They maintain that the Indians, who have enjoyed the beginnings of self-rule only since Britain conquered and pacified the country, are as yet too inexperienced to assume full control. According to the British, the order and stability which have made possible recent experiments in responsible government were due to the existence of an external authority, the Viceroy. Too rapid a withdrawal of this impartial umpire might lead to chaos and violence, reversing the trend toward self-rule and requiring the renewal of British domination. The Act of 1935, in the British view, represented the only practicable compromise for a transition period and laid the groundwork for a federation of British India and the States.

Many critics, Indian as well as British, condemn the proposal for a constituent assembly. This they regard as an unwieldy body which could not adequately represent all of the various interests in the country and draft a constitutional project.⁸⁸ They point out that in the past large constituent assemblies, usually the product of revolutions, have rarely proved successful in creating permanent political systems, and therefore advocate the creation of a relatively small drafting committee representing every important religious, economic and political element. Opponents of the assembly scheme, including the Muslim League, maintain that it would inevitably give almost complete con-

trol to the Congress leaders, the most politically active and advanced group in India.

The British government consistently refuses to admit the claim of the Congress party to speak for the entire country. It recognizes the Congress as the largest and strongest single organization in India, composed of 4,478,720 members,⁸⁹ headed largely by Hindu intellectuals, but not entitled to speak for 350,000,000 Indians, almost 90 per cent of whom are illiterate. Critics of the Congress, moreover, charge that it maintains discipline and enforces conformity upon its members in a manner inconsistent with modern democracy.⁹⁰ They argue that genuine self-government in India will be impossible until, after long experience under some system similar to the Act of 1935 scheme, normal political parties—embracing all religious and social groups—are able to debate and dispute in conventional parliamentary fashion.

The British also continue to regard the Congress as a predominantly, though not entirely, Hindu party, particularly since it is challenged on this ground by the Muslim League. The Hindu Mahasabha—an organization of orthodox Hindus which was established before the World War but which remained relatively inactive until recently—has gained strength as a result of Hindu-Muslim controversies under the Provincial governments.⁹¹ During the Viceroy's first series of conversations with national leaders, in September 1939, the Mahasabha president, Mr. V. D. Savakar, joined several other opponents of the Congress in a telegram of protest, warning Lord Linlithgow that neither the Congress nor the Muslim League was entitled to negotiate as spokesman for the nation.⁹² In December 1939 Mr. Savakar strongly defended the Hindu position in India's political and cultural life.⁹³ Another group in the Hindu community, the depressed classes—through an organization headed by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar—have also challenged the Congress party's right to represent the whole Indian population.⁹⁴ Although

89. *Report of the General Secretary*, cited, p. 36.

90. "No one can be a member of the Congress today and serve the country in that capacity unless he submits unquestioningly to vexatious restrictions which have no bearing whatever on political and civil life. Over and above this he must hold as an article of faith the infallibility of the individuals who happen to constitute the High Command." *The Indian Social Reformer*, January 13, 1940, p. 236. Cf. C. R. Reddy, "The Indian Constitutional Problem," *The Twentieth Century*, January 1940, pp. 263-72; also, address of Dr. Paranjpye, president of the National Liberal Federation, referring to "totalitarianism" in both the Congress and the Muslim League, *The Indian Social Reformer*, January 6, 1940, p. 222.

91. *The Indian Social Reformer*, January 20, 1940, p. 246.

92. For text, cf. "India and the War," Cmd. 6121, cited, p. 15.

93. *The Indian Social Reformer*, January 6, 1940, p. 223.

94. Dr. Ambedkar was one of the seven signatories of the telegram mentioned above, as was Dr. Paranjpye, president of the National Liberal Federation.

86. The warning of repression given by Sir Samuel Hoare, quoted in footnote 51 above, was repeated on April 18, 1940 by Sir Hugh O'Neill, Under-Secretary for India: "The situation is difficult and not without danger. If civil disobedience, unfortunately, is adopted, His Majesty's Government will be bound to take full measures to counteract it." *The New York Times*, April 19, 1940.

87. For recent statements of the British position, cf. Sir Alfred H. Watson, "Britain's Aims in India," *The Forum*, May 1940, pp. 252-56; John Coatman, "India Today and Tomorrow," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1940, pp. 314-23.

88. Cf. Scrutator, "The Present Impasse," *The Twentieth Century*, January 1940, pp. 251-62. For the most effective criticism of the constituent assembly proposal, cf. Sir Maurice Gwyer (Chief Justice of India), "Convocation Address" at Benares Hindu University, December 23, 1939 (pamphlet), reprinted in *The Round Table*, March 1940, pp. 480-89.

Mahatma Gandhi has made special efforts within recent years to keep the "untouchables" within the Congress, many of them oppose it as dominated by high-caste Hindus.

THE MUSLIM QUESTION

The problem of Hindu-Muslim relations, perhaps the most difficult in India, has offered the British ample opportunity to postpone or refuse a constitutional settlement.⁹⁵ The Muslims, numbering 77,000,000 in 1931, reside chiefly in the northwest areas—the Punjab, Northwest Frontier Province, and Sind—and Bengal. As the Muslim faith differs on many essentials in principle and practice from that of the Hindus, communal strife has often led to violence, although there have been relatively few outbreaks in recent years.⁹⁶ Cultural and religious relations between the two communities are normally amicable, especially in the smaller villages, but conflict frequently arises over larger questions of economic position, social prestige, and political power. The Muslims, less advanced politically and often in debt to Hindu merchants and bankers, allege that the Hindus discriminate against them in business, education and civil service. Many Muslims, moreover, resent the undemocratic principles of the orthodox Hindus, who forbid inter-dining and inter-marrying with non-Hindus, and who regard even upper class Muslims as socially inferior to the lowest-caste Hindu. Some of them, fearing that federation or independence would lead to Hindu domination of the entire country, oppose the efforts of the Congress on behalf of Indian freedom.

Although numerous Muslims are members of the Congress party, which formed a government in the Northwest Frontier Province (90 per cent Muslim population), the All-India Muslim League—previously closely associated in the independence movement—has recently renewed its hostility to the Congress. Not only has the electoral system aggravated the tension between the communities, but the growth of nationalism and political consciousness since the World War has stimulated each community—Sikh, Parsi, and Christian, as well as Hindu and Muslim—to become interested in its religious and cultural history and to demand a share in the political spoils of constitutional reform. In an effort to improve the Muslim position before new constitutional discussions begin, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, president of the Muslim

League, has undertaken a campaign against the Congress. In addition to demanding that a Royal Commission investigate the treatment of Muslims in the Provinces controlled by Congress ministries, Mr. Jinnah called upon Muslims to celebrate December 22, 1939 as a "day of deliverance" from the Provincial governments.⁹⁷ The Muslim League opposed the Congress throughout the discussions with Lord Linlithgow, and eventually—largely to improve its bargaining position—advocated the division of India into Muslim and Hindu states.⁹⁸ Partly as an effort to disprove the League's charges that the Congress is a predominantly Hindu organization, the party on February 15, 1940 elected a Mohammedan, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, president for 1940-41.⁹⁹ Many other Muslim organizations, moreover, deny the League's authority to speak for the Mohammedan community, and charge that the League is controlled by conservative business men who fear Congress radicalism.

The British government has maintained that any constitutional change must provide for protection of Muslim rights, and has therefore weighted electoral distribution and legislative representation in favor of the Muslims. Some such compensation—inevitable to a certain extent in every federal structure and parliamentary system—is probably necessary at present, since the Muslims constitute less than one-fourth of the total population and are in a minority in all but four Provinces. The Muslims, moreover, have appeared less able than the Hindus to organize politically. Critics of the government charge, however, that Britain supports the Muslim cause in order to foment dissension within India and to enhance British prestige throughout the Muslim world. They argue further that British officials personally prefer the Muslims, who are usually active and aggressive, to the more passive and introspective Hindus, and that they rely too heavily on the so-called "martial races" of the northwest, chiefly Muslims and Sikhs, for defense purposes.

THE DEFENSE PROBLEM

During the wartime negotiations, as on all previous occasions, the Governor-General stressed the difficulty of providing for the defense of an independent India. While the British have always claimed that they have benefited India by furnishing adequate defense—through small but strong forces at the Northwest Frontier and the British navy—at relatively little cost to the country, Indian

95. For a survey of the general problem, cf. Smith, *Nationalism and Reform in India*, cited, pp. 331-70.

96. Riots occurred in Bombay in August 1939, but resulted in no fatalities. *The New York Times*, August 2, 1939. A more serious clash, leading to twenty-five deaths, broke out in Lahore on March 19, 1940. *Ibid.*, March 20, 1940.

97. *Christian Science Monitor*, December 22, 1939.

98. Cf. p. 78.

99. *New York Herald Tribune*, February 16, 1940.

critics have replied that administrative charges have been too high, that the army has existed chiefly for suppression of rebellion, and that Indianization of the army has progressed too slowly.¹⁰⁰ Although the defense question would remain one of the most difficult issues in any negotiations over a new status for India, it is probable that the Congress leaders, particularly Mahatma Gandhi, would accept a compromise satisfactory to the British.

The mobilization of India's economic and military resources for the European war has aroused particular resentment in Congress and other circles, especially as war was declared and troops sent overseas by exclusively executive action.¹⁰¹ The first contingent of Indian troops, largely Muslims, arrived in France in December 1939.¹⁰² The British government announced on March 1, 1940 that it would share with India the cost of maintaining Indian troops overseas; it offered £34,000,000, one-fourth as a loan, to modernize the Indian army, and agreed to meet much of the additional expense of wartime preparation, while India would pay the normal cost of its defense establishment and part of the emergency outlay.¹⁰³

POSITION OF THE PRINCES

The present political stalemate results in part from the anomalous relation of the Native States to British India, which offers the British government additional opportunity to delay independence.¹⁰⁴ Although the Princes were originally favorable to the scheme projected in the Act of 1935, they recorded their opposition to the draft instruments of accession offered by the Viceroy in June 1939.¹⁰⁵ The Princes—anxious to maintain their treaty rights with the Crown, to avoid federal administration of laws within their States, and to protect their land revenues—probably hoped by this action to obtain better terms from the British government.¹⁰⁶ Their rejection of federalism was based primarily, however, on hostility to the Con-

gress, which increasingly advocated the extension of responsible government and social reforms, often by sending Congressmen to campaign in the States. The situation gradually developed into a vicious circle, since the recalcitrance of the Princes provoked the Congress to increase its agitation for curtailment of autocratic rule in the States.

The conflict between Congress and the Princes reached a climax in March 1939, when Mahatma Gandhi intervened in a dispute in Rajkot State.¹⁰⁷ The Rajkot ruler, called the Thakore Saheb, had agreed with Mr. V. Patel, a Congress leader, to appoint a committee of ten members to consider reforms within the State and to accept Mr. Patel's recommendations for seven of the members. When the Thakore Saheb later refused to accept several of Mr. Patel's nominees, Gandhi—claiming that the rejection had been advised by the British Resident in Rajkot, a charge denied by the government—announced on March 3 a "fast unto death" unless the ruler relented.¹⁰⁸ Gandhi ended his fast after ninety-six hours, following the intervention of Lord Linlithgow, who arranged that the dispute would be settled by the Chief Justice of India, Sir Maurice Gwyer.¹⁰⁹ After the Chief Justice had reached a decision favoring the Congress case, however, Gandhi was unable to secure the cooperation of the various religious communities in Rajkot and renounced the entire campaign, apologizing to the Viceroy and Chief Justice for the trouble he had caused.¹¹⁰

As in the World War, the Princes are now offering men and money to Great Britain for prosecution of the war, over 300 States having already endorsed the British cause.¹¹¹ Since this participation of the Princes is motivated partly by a desire to express loyalty to the Crown and keep Britain obligated to the States, it will make a constitutional settlement even more difficult in the future. While the British government occasionally warns the States of the necessity for promoting political reforms and brings pressure to bear on the more irresponsible Princes, it has not yet agreed to force the States into a federation or to accelerate the spread of democratic government.

100. For analysis of the problem, cf. T. A. Bisson, "The Military Problem in India," *Foreign Policy Reports*, October 14, 1931.

101. For a summary of India's war effort, cf. Lieut.-Colonel Sir Frederick O'Connor, "India's Military Contribution to the War," *The Asiatic Review*, April 1940, pp. 207-18; also, "India in the War," *The Times*, December 5, 29, 1939.

102. *The New York Times*, December 28, 1939.

103. *The Times*, March 1, 1940.

104. For a discussion of this problem, critical of the States, cf. Eric Beecroft, "The Indian Princes and the British Raj," *Amerasia*, April 1940, pp. 86-91; for interpretations favorable to the Princes, cf. Sir Alfred H. Watson, "The Indian States: Background to Princely Problems," *Great Britain and the East*, March 7, 1940, pp. 159-61; and Sir Frederick Sykes, "Federation and the States," *The Times*, February 14, 1940.

105. Cf. p. 73.

106. Cf. "Prospects of Indian Federation," *The Round Table*, September 1939, pp. 768-81; "The Future of the Indian States," *ibid.*, June 1939, pp. 504-17.

107. Cf. Haridas T. Muzumdar, *Gandhi Triumphant! The Inside Story of the Historic Fast* (New York, Universal Publishing Company, 1939).

108. *New York Herald Tribune*, March 4, 1939.

109. *Ibid.*, March 8, 1939.

110. *Christian Science Monitor*, May 18, 1939. This procedure contributed to the distrust which the Congress left wing feels regarding Gandhi's leadership in wartime.

111. Cf. O'Connor, "India's Military Contribution to the War," cited, p. 213.

The Congress party finds it difficult to accomplish its aims regarding the States, where it maintains close cooperation with the All-India States' Peoples' Conference, because of Britain's treaty obligations to the Princes.¹¹² Some compromise between British India and the States will eventually become necessary, however, perhaps by consolidation of the smaller States into a few large units.¹¹³

CONCLUSION

Although a solution of the Indian problem is not yet in sight, the positions taken by the British and the Congress party now appear somewhat less irreconcilable than at the outbreak of war. By declaring India a belligerent on September 3, 1939 without any consultation of the Central Legislature or Indian leaders, the British government—while acting within its legal rights—committed a psychological blunder and provoked resentment and criticism both in India and elsewhere. Probably realizing that the Congress party would criticize any action taken by Britain at the outbreak of war and utilize the emergency to its own advantage, the British government pursued a firm policy in order to maintain its prestige, to hold Muslim support in India and elsewhere, and to discourage Congress hopes for immediate constitutional revision. The speeches of the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, and the former Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, failed to appease Congress hostility or to win general enthusiasm in India, because of their constant reference to pledges of Dominion status made in 1917, 1919 and 1929 but not yet fulfilled. By refusing to discuss constitutional reforms during the war and implying that Dominion status may be again postponed, the British leaders have jeopardized their own war aims, which declare the Allies to be fighting for democracy, and have provided fuel for their critics in both enemy and neutral countries.¹¹⁴

112. Mahatma Gandhi had originally abstained from intervention in the States—in order not to disperse his forces, needed for the main struggle with Britain. Later, after the Act of 1935 had weighted constitutional power in favor of the Princes, he gave greater support to the States' Peoples' Conference on the ground that the Princes were using British troops to suppress rebellion and resentment.

113. For a discussion of this problem, with a catalogue of the States according to area, population and revenue, cf. Research Bureau, All-India States' Peoples' Conference, *What are the Indian States?* (Allahabad, 1939).

114. For a survey of world press opinion, cf. Basil Mathews, "World-Wide Reaction to Events in India," *The Asiatic Review*, April 1940, pp. 251-68.

The Congress party, on the other hand, has dangerously increased the tension by stiffening its demands and resigning its offices in the Provincial governments. By insisting on its recognition as the sole representative of the Indian people and constantly minimizing the religious differences within the country, the Congress has provoked suspicion in the Muslim League and other groups. By making a constituent assembly the *sine qua non* of negotiations, the Congress has sponsored a complex and perhaps unworkable procedure and increased the hostility of other sections of opinion. It often appears reluctant to admit the technical difficulties of framing and administering a federal system, with full protection for the rights of all minorities. The rigid discipline of the party itself, moreover, has aroused criticism among moderate groups in India.

No solution of this controversy seems possible without extensive concessions from all factions concerned. While the British will not conceivably agree to immediate and complete independence for India, they may find it expedient to grant the equivalent of Dominion status, with special arrangements for protection of their defense and economic interests. Such a formal declaration at this time, with details to be worked out after the war, would reinforce Gandhi's conciliatory leadership in the Congress and strengthen Britain's diplomatic position generally. The Congress, for its part, by accepting Dominion status and cooperating with other groups in the preparation of a new constitution, would contribute to the improvement of political conditions in India.

One objective which all parties to the conflict will have to bear in mind is the maintenance of India's unity. In view of the disastrous consequences of the "Balkanization" process in Europe, it would be unfortunate if the country were broken up into autonomous sections. Maintenance of unity would require drastic consolidation of the States and reduction of the powers of the Princes. It would preclude the establishment of an independent Muslim state, but would presuppose a generous degree of "home-rule" for the predominantly Muslim areas. Some such compromise, difficult as it is to attain, should not be beyond the ingenuity of British and Indian statesmen, granted that a willingness to surrender privileges and make concessions exists on both sides.

The June 15 issue of FOREIGN POLICY REPORTS will be
 ECONOMIC MOBILIZATION OF BELLIGERENTS: I. GERMANY. *By John C. deWilde*